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THE RELEVANCE TO TEACHER SELECTION OF CIVIL SERVICE PERSONNEL SELECTION PRACTICES IN NEW YORK STATE.

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FOLLOWING DISCUSSION OF THE NATURE AND VALIDITY OF NEW YORK STATE CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS, IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT VALIDITY OF SELECTION PRACTICES CONCERNS CONSIDERATIONS BEYOND A COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION BETWEEN A SET OF PREDICTOR SCORES AND A SET OF JOB PERFORMANCE CRITERIA. THE REAL VALUE OF A SELECTION PROGRAM LIES IN ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN ATTRACTING AND SECURING THE APPOINTMENT OF SUFFICIENT NUMBERS OF CANDIDATES WHO CAN AND WILL PERFORM REQUIRED SERVICES AT QUALITY STANDARDS. THIS KIND OF EFFECTIVENESS MAY BE ACHIEVED WITH TESTS OF MODERATE VALIDITY AND MAY FAIL OF ACHIEVEMENT WITH EVALUATIVE INSTRUMENTS WHOSE STATISTICAL VALIDITY WOULD SEEM TO BE HIGHER. IN THE PRESENT STATE OF THE LABOR MARKET FOR TEACHERS, BASIC EFFORTS ARE REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE INDUCEMENTS AND REDUCE THE DETERRENTS FOR ENTERING THE PROFESSION, TO IDENTIFY TEACHER POTENTIAL AND TO ENLARGE AND IMPROVE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES. UNTIL THESE LONG-TERM GOALS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED, IMPROVEMENTS IN PUBLICITY AND EVALUATIVE TECHNIQUES CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE THE QUALITY AND NUMBERS OF TEACHERS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN, LET ALONE EXPAND AND IMPROVE, OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN GILBERT, H.B., AND LANG, G., "TEACHER SELECTION METHODS," 1967. (RF)

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TEACHER SELECTION METHODS

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The Relevance to Teacher Selection of Civil Service Personnel Selection Practices in New York State

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Introduction

Consideration of personnel selection practices in American civil service is fraught with the twin hazards of overcomplication and overgeneralization. One convenient generalization is that appointment or promotion is the responsibility of an appointing officer in an operating agency. His selection however is ordinarily limited to a small number of eligibles standing highest on an evaluative listing prepared by a central personnel agency for existing and prospective vacancies in a whole class of positions.

This separation of evaluative and selective processes derives from the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers of the legislative and executive branches of government. Civil Service laws at both State and Federal levels have been interpreted by the judiciary as a legislative restriction on executive powers. Provision of laws or regulations limiting the appointing authority to a single eligible have been held unconstitutional by both State and Federal courts. Consequently most American civil service systems have adopted the "rule of three" whereby the civil service agency affords the appointing authority a choice of three eligibles ranked highest among those available for consideration for a particular vacancy. Some jurisdictions have further widened the zone of consideration, in recognition that important factors may not have been assessed precisely or that there may be differences among positions in the same class or simply in deference to managerial responsibility. For some classes of positions the evaluative process itself may be shared with or delegated to operating agencies, subject to procedural standards prescribed by the civil service agency. In some jurisdictions and agencies, however, the executive branch has imposed on itself a "rule of one," with each appointment restricted to the highest ranking available eligible. Personnel shortages in many occupational categories have made most of these practices and distinctions largely academic.

Historically and traditionally the competitive civil service procedures were designed to set up waiting lists of many candidates for a limited number of positions which were more attractive than demanding. The competition contemplated was that of

many candidates demonstrating their relative merit, fitness (and patience) for a few coveted appointments.

In recent years the public service has been engaged in an entirely different competitive situation, that of competing with other employers for a fair share of professional specialty personnel in scarce supply and a fair share of high potential beginners and generalists from larger and less specialized pools of manpower. A change in tempo has also been required--leisurely and elaborate evaluation procedures have been superseded by continuous recruitment and early offers of appointment.

The personnel selection process properly starts with attracting the attention and interest of sufficient numbers of apparently qualified personnel. If potential candidates are unaware of or unimpressed with or averse to the conditions and opportunities of employment, efforts must be directed to improving and publicizing attractions and to reducing deterrents. Salaries must be adequate, working conditions and fringe benefits must be competitive, and professional staff must be supported by sub-professional and clerical assistance so that they may devote themselves to the professional aspects of their jobs. There must also be reasonable opportunities to grow and develop on and off the job.

Unless and until the positions to be filled are able to compete for the interest of qualified personnel there is no point to elaborate evaluation and selection devices and procedures.

Selection Programs and Practices in New York State Civil Service

The New York State Civil Service system is concerned with entrance and promotion examinations, competitive and non-competitive, in the service of the State and in the service of many local units of government. The State service alone comprises roughly 100,000 positions in 3000 position classes. In addition, local jurisdictions and public authorities use the State's personnel examining services in keeping perhaps 75,000 positions filled in several hundred distinct classes.

Providing personnel examining services in establishing eligible lists to fill vacancies in these positions currently requires approximately 4000 examinations annually involving around 150,000 applicants. The number of applicants with which the State civil service examinations are concerned is in the same general order of magnitude as in the New York City civil service but the number and variety of position classes covered and numbers of

examinations required annually are many times larger. Compared with the total Federal civil service system, however, New York State is concerned with only a fraction of the numbers of candidates, positions, position classes and competitions. The personnel operations of the Federal system are kept within manageable limits by geographic decentralization and delegation of responsibility for promotion and occupational specialty examinations to Federal departments and agencies. Compared with the separate offices of the Federal Civil Service Commission, Central and Regional, the New York State Department of Civil Service faces a similar total volume and variety of personnel selection problems in original appointments and a much heavier load in connection with promotion examinations.

Much of the State's examining program is concerned with levels and types of personnel whose recruitment and selection have little relevance to the recruitment and selection of teachers.

Examining prospective personnel for positions requiring little formal training or for which the labor supply is ample in relation to the numbers needed presents problems and justifies procedures presumably of little pertinence to the selection for positions requiring considerable formal training and for which the available supply of applicants compared to needs is limited in quality and numbers.

The State Civil Service Department has minimal responsibility for evaluating candidates for classroom teaching positions. Only in correctional, welfare, and mental hygiene institutions are there such positions under its selection program. Teaching positions in public schools throughout the State are under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents and outside the civil service personnel selection system. The State Civil Service system, however, does include educational experts and supervisors in departments of education, State and local. The system also recruits and examines for many classes of professional personnel using methods and procedures possibly relevant to the selection of classroom teachers.

Most State civil service recruiting and selection examinations begin with a public announcement setting forth a general description of the positions to be filled, any restrictive conditions of residence, age or sex, the prerequisite education and experience required, the application procedure, and an outline of the nature and coverage of the various parts of the examining process.

Typically, there is a formal written test on a preannounced date at designated examining centers throughout the

State of New York and by special request and arrangement at centers outside the State. For higher level positions or those involving interpersonal skills the examination may include an oral test. For a limited number of classes of positions there may be a competitive evaluation of training and experience beyond that required for admission to the examination.

There may also be other parts of the examination. Promotion examinations always include added points for seniority at a preannounced rate of so many fractional points per year of service. in the jurisdiction. They may include points for quality of job performance during the past year. Veterans preference credits are granted for a single occasion for each qualified wartime veteran who was a New York resident at entrance into military service. Medical and physical strength and agility tests may be required. Usually there is a verification of claimed education and experience and a check of police records and inquiry into records of physical disability, imprisonment or hospitalization for mental or emotional disorders.

Some or all of the various parts or stages of the examination may be administered as successive hurdles with only those passing an earlier stage admitted to the later or the various parts may be administered to all candidates allowing strengths on some parts to compensate for deficiencies in other parts. Some parts may be rated in three distinct scoring zones, clearly passing, clearly failing or conditionally passing.

The various parts of the examination are eventually combined into an evaluative listing or ranking of all the candidates passing the entire examination and surviving each part of the examination on which there is a required and preannounced passing mark.

In some examinations there may be more than one ordering or ranking of candidates, usually related to special requirements or options for some of the positions to be filled. Some candidates may qualify only on one of these options or specialties whereas others may qualify for two or more. There may be two or more levels of positions to be filled with some candidates willing to be considered or meeting educational, experiential or test standards for only one of the levels. A formal reranking or selective certification of eligibles for a class, a practice sometimes followed in Federal exams, U.S. and Canadian, is not allowed in New York State

civil service examinations, although of course appointing officers who avail themselves of the choice of three or more eligibles within the consideration zone may in effect be reranking such eligibles in accordance with their conception of the needs of an individual position they are seeking to fill.

The written tests designed and used in State civil service examinations embody an attempt to effect a reasonable compromise between generality and particularity. The major emphasis has been concentrated on planning, developing and refining a manageable number of reusable multi-purpose tests which in various combinations and with varying weights and standards may be incorporated in many different examinations. Hundreds of position classes have important elements in common. Some knowledges and abilities are common to a number of classes at particular levels. Others are common to several levels of particular occupational families. Many classes involve such general functions as supervision, administration, research and statistics, interviewing, investigation, or report writing or such basic abilities as reading comprehension, verbal, quantitative and abstract reasoning, interpretation of tables and graphs, scale and instrument reading or spatial perception.

The State's selection program for professional and administrative trainees illustrates a number of features of possible application to the selection of teachers. The basic requirement is graduation from a recognized college. Subject matter knowledge is not directly tested but consideration for specialized positions is limited to candidates meeting relevant course requirements. A five-part differential aptitude battery is administered to all candidates using different weights and standards for groups of positions with different needs. The five parts of the aptitude test battery were derived from a battery developed for the Federal Civil Service where weights and standards for different professional classes were those which most sharply discriminated different levels of job performance among employees with war-service duration appointments. An oral test to appraise ability to express ideas and to deal effectively with others is administered on a pass-fail basis as a condition of appointment to positions of administrative trainee. Eligibles without postgraduate training or professional level experience are considered for trainee level appointments at a salary of $6300 annually which matures on completion of a year's service and on-the-job training to permanent appointments at a salary level of $6675 under present pay scale. Eligibles with postgraduate training or professional experience or with superior academic records may be appointed directly to the $6675 level.

The Validity of Selection Practices

The validity of selection practices may be defined in many different ways and different definitions imply different methods of appraisal. To attempt to generalize on the validity of a considerable variety of practices for the whole gamut of position classes in the public service would seem to verge on absurdity. Even when the appraisal of validity is limited to determining the correlation between a set of scores on a battery of tests and a set of independent observations of the major aspects of actual job performance in a single class of positions, the practical difficulties are formidable.

Broadly speaking, the validity of selection batteries for a single class of positions is limited by the following considerations:

a. The extent to which they make distinctions among applicants which are not relevant to differences in work performance.

b. The extent to which they neglect knowledges, abilities and personal attributes which are relevant to differences in work performance.

c. The extent to which unpredicted changes take place in the motivation and development of individuals between their evaluations as prospective and actual workers. The longer the interval before appointment the more important this factor becomes.

d. The extent to which unpredicted differences occur in the nature or conditions of work from time to time or place to place.

e. Errors of measurement or lack of reliability in the tests.

f. Lack of reliability or inter-rater differences in judging the quality of work performance.

The selection programs of the public service are not immune to these limitations. In attempting to minimize some of the limitations we undoubtedly magnify others.

When the reliability of the criterion (factor f) is in the neighborhood of .7 and that of the test (factor e) is .9, the

highest validity co-efficient that could be expected would be .63 even if factors a, b, c, and d were ideal. When new test batteries are experimentally administered to present employees factors c and d are inoperative but correlations may be limited by restrictions in the range of present employees accomplished by the original selection process and by accelerated turnover of both poor and superior employees.

Multiple correlation studies between selection test batteries and overall criteria of job performance in the public service have occasionally yielded co-efficients of correlation as high as .6 but .4 is more frequent.

When we talk of validity of selection practices we presumably are concerned with considerations beyond a co-efficient of correlation between a set of predictor scores and a set of job performance criteria. The real value of a selection program lies in its effectiveness in attracting and securing the appointment of sufficient numbers of candidates who can and will perform required services at quality standards. This kind of effectiveness may be achieved with tests of moderate validity and may fail of achievement with evaluative instruments whose statistical validity is as high as fallible criteria will permit.

In the present state of the labor market for teachers, basic efforts are required to improve the inducements and reduce the deterrents for entering the profession, to identify teacher potential and to enlarge and improve training opportunities. Until these long-term goals can be accomplished, improvements in publicity and evaluative techniques cannot be expected to provide the quality and number of teachers needed to maintain, let alone expand and improve, our educational systems.